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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MOSCOW 003055

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TAGS: PREL PGOV RS AF

SUBJECT: RUSSIA ON MILITARY EQUIPMENT DONATIONS TO
AFGHANISTAN AND COUNTERNARCOTICS COOPERATION

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Susan Elliott for reason 1.
4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: In parallel with SRAP Holbrooke's visit to Moscow, a U.S.-Russia interagency working group composed of counternarcotics and military experts met to discuss potential areas of cooperation and assistance to Afghanistan.

Although the GOR counternarcotics programs for Afghan police forces are sparsely attended, the Russians remain ready to continue the training. Regarding military equipment donations, the MFA stated that the GOR would consider such requests, provided they come from the Afghan government. End Summary.

COUNTER-NARCOTICS TRAINING

¶2. (C) The Russian Delegation was led by Zamir Kabulov, head of the MFA's Second Asia Department and former Russian Ambassador to Afghanistan. Kabulov began the session with an overview of Russia's programs to train Afghan counternarcotics police officers. He mentioned that the Ministry of Interior (MOI) decided last year to accept up to 225 Afghan counternarcotics police at its training facilities, but that the program was suspended after the Afghan side failed to provide a list of prospective trainees.

He added that the MOI was nevertheless ready and willing to continue cooperation in this area. Kabulov said that the MOI also experienced problems with a second program, set up under OSCE auspices at the Domodedovo International Training Center, when Afghan counternarcotics police failed to arrive for their designated courses "in a timely fashion." He noted that FM Lavrov might raise the issue with President Karzai when they meet at the inauguration. Kabulov mentioned a third program carried out through the NATO-Russia Council that he described as achieving "modest" results.

¶3. (C) MOI official Larissa Kochetova next outlined training activities conducted at the Domodedovo Center since the establishment of the program in 2006. She said the Center had emphasized practical counternarcotics training for Afghan and Central Asian law enforcement officials with a focus on international cooperation, drug routes, and investigative work. While she reiterated the Center's willingness to expand its efforts to train Afghan police, Kochetova described logistical problems that hinder Afghan participation. She mentioned several instances in which either the Center did not receive lists of Afghan trainees "in a timely manner" or the participants failed to appear on their appointed arrival day. Kochetova said that the Center's system of "training the trainers" enabled returning participants to share their knowledge with a wider group in Afghanistan. She explained that many of the training instructors at Domodedovo are from other countries, such as

Italy, Finland, Bulgaria, and (beginning next year) Germany. Kochetova also noted that the Center's physical facilities, such as the mock drug lab, were important for enhancing the practical knowledge of participants. She closed by saying the Center would be grateful for any assistance in helping Afghan groups to arrive on time.

MILITARY ASSISTANCE: GOA MUST ASK

¶4. (C) Turning to military assistance for Afghanistan, Kabulov stated that the GOR wanted to create strong Afghan army and police forces that could bring security and stability to the country. He noted that bilateral cooperation between Russia and Afghanistan began in 2003 with the signing of protocols and that from 2004 to 2006 Russia had provided USD 200 million in military hardware donations including trucks, communication equipment, artillery, rifles, jeeps, and spare parts. Kabulov said the GOR was now reluctant to cooperate with the Afghan MOD, and said Afghan MinDef Wardak had dropped hints that the U.S. had told the Afghan MOD to refuse donations that were not compliant with NATO standards.

¶5. (C) Kabulov remarked that the GOR did not want to impose assistance on Afghanistan, and that the Afghan government, therefore, should make specific requests for weapons. He said that the Afghan MOD had expressed a desire for Russian weapons because they were familiar to Afghan forces and superior to similar weapons made in other countries but that

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the GOR was troubled by unlicensed and inferior copies of Russian weapons. The GOR, according to Kabulov, was ready to start military equipment cooperation with Afghanistan, but the modalities needed to be worked out.

¶6. (C) When told that Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (CSTC-A) provided a list of needed equipment to the GOR, Kabulov said Moscow would like to work with Afghanistan bilaterally, and encouraged Afghan MinDef Wardak to come to Russia for discussions. He said the GOR Ministry of Finance should determine how much aid Russia could provide to Afghanistan, but insisted the GOR would like to sell weapons to Afghanistan in addition to donating them. He also acknowledged that Mi-17 helicopters would be useful for the Afghans, especially if used for counternarcotics operations.

¶7. (C) Closing the discussion, Kabulov stressed that the Afghan forces themselves must be involved in future discussions about requirements and donations and that they themselves must believe that they are fighting for their own interests. He noted that morale could not be imported. Kabulov also stated that the MFA was ready to discuss further donations and cooperation in this area and that they would pass this information to the MOD.

¶8. (C) Comment: The MOD was not represented at this MFA-led meeting. MFA officials have previously stated that the MOD would make decisions regarding donations of military equipment to Afghanistan. In a parallel conversation with SRAP Holbrooke, MOD officials said decisions on military assistance are made by the Russian president and MOD stood ready to implement any decisions made. MOD officials declined requests for working-level meetings. Additionally, Russia's counternarcotics agency, the FSKN, was also not invited by the MFA to participate. Therefore, the counternarcotics dialogue focused on Russia's training programs at the Domodedovo Center and did not include discussion on policy issues.

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